

Written Testimony, February 17, 2012
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Good Evening. My name is Kara Capone and I am the Director of Programs for New Haven Home Recovery, Inc. NHHR provides emergency shelter, supportive housing, family stabilization and furniture to over 1,600 men, women and children annually. I am here today to talk about the devastating cuts to the Family School Connection Program, funded through the Children's Trust Fund.

The Family School Connection program (FSC) was designed to deliver comprehensive services through the use of a home visiting model to promote positive parenting and reduce incidences of child abuse and neglect. The services we provide through FSC may sound like a duplication of the Nurturing Families Network, but it clearly is not. What makes this program different is that the targeted child is elementary school aged with all family members receiving services. The point of entry into services is the school itself. The interesting thing about doing a school-based abuse and neglect prevention program is that there was a curious byproduct: We started to also close the achievement gap. The children we work with struggled at home and as a result struggled at school. When we introduced evidence-based practices into the home, we stabilized the family and the children were therefore able to be academically successful. For example, in New Haven we were able to track grades and found that there was a 67% increase in A's and B's. We also saw a decrease in absences and tardiness to the point where we demonstrated significant reductions in these areas when comparing Year 1 of the program with Year 2. These children no longer met the definition of chronic absenteeism.

When we looked at the family stabilization component, we also found some excellent results. In New Haven, **85%** of the families enrolled in FSC were able to maintain or increase their income. This is an incredible figure considering our families are some of the poorest of the poor and extremely susceptible to the economic dips and valleys of this Great Recession. Due to the FSC interventions parental involvement in school significantly improved in all five program sites. There were also statistically significant differences in Parental Community Life Skills specifically in the areas of transportation, budgeting, support services, involvement, hobbies and routines. These are key factors in stabilizing a home. Parental success, child success and school achievement are all interrelated. The Family School Connection program is still evolving, which is fundamental to programs that strive for excellence. In the future (and hopefully there is one) we are interested in tracking decreases in DCF referrals by school personnel and changes in DRA (Developmental Reading Assessment) scores.

The FSC program as a whole, has struggled due to continuous threat of funding cuts. Each year, this wonderful little gem of a program goes unnoticed and unrecognized for its accomplishments. It was just too new and too small to show results. Well I am here today to tell you it works – it gets results. For some of the other sites that have struggled with maintaining staffing due to ever-

looming cuts, I would like to hold up New Haven as the example of the success the other sites can achieve if funding was not constantly threatened. This program should be given a chance to thrive, and as such help the children and families we work with thrive as well.

I would also like to add my support of the Children's Trust Fund Council legislative goals of fully funding all Children's Trust Fund programs. Each is integral in the future success of the children served through each program.

In closing I would like to thank the committee for their time today and will be happy to answer any questions. Thank you.

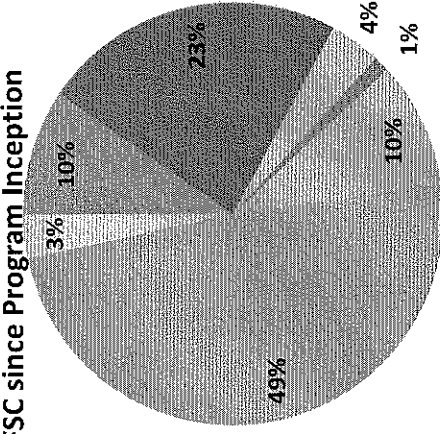
New Haven Family School Connection Fact Sheet

Family School Connection (FSC)

FSC was established in 2009 in the Fair Haven K-8 School in New Haven. FSC works with students who have issues with truancy, tardiness, educational neglect, or behavioral issues. The goals of the FSC program are to:

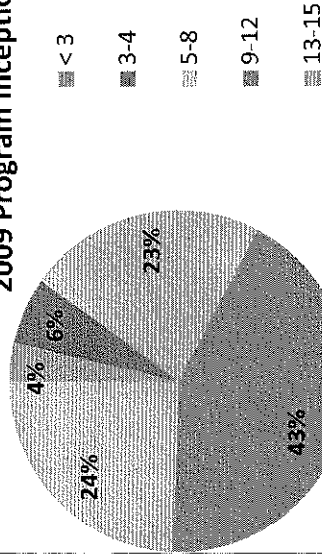
- Stabilize families
- Improve nurturing parenting skills
- Strengthen the parent-child and home-school relationships
- Increase parental engagement in their child's education
- Increase students' grades

Racial demographics for families served by FSC since Program Inception



- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Black or African American
- Missing
- More than one race
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White (Hispanic)
- White (Not Hispanic)

Children Served by FSC from 2009 Program Inception



Agency Clients served since program start in 2009

- 351 People
- 86 Families
- 164 Children (ages 5-15)

Agency Clients served FY 2011

- 270 People
- 70 Families
- 127 Children (ages 5-15)

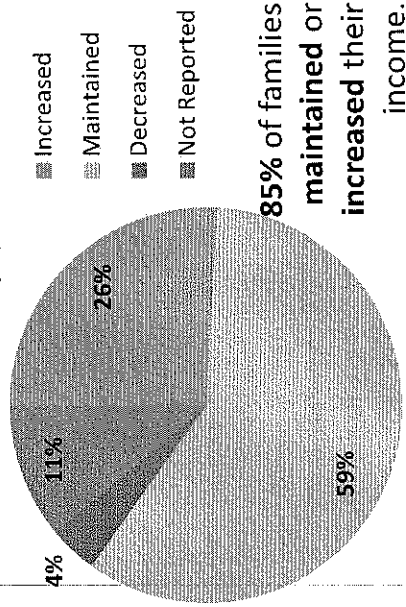
Success Story

Cindy and her 10-year old daughter and 14-year old son walked into New Haven Home Recovery seeking shelter after being kicked out of a friend's home. Cindy heard about NHHR's work with providing housing to families and came to the agency seeking help. Upon the family's arrival, a FSC Home Visitor completed an intake with the family. Due to statewide shelters having no available beds, the Home Visitor referred the family to the Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-housing Program (HPRP). In coordination with HPRP, the family received a hotel voucher to meet the family's immediate housing needs until a room became available in a shelter.

The FSC Home Visitor completed weekly coordinated care visits during their transition from hotel to shelter and, finally, to permanent housing through HPRP. The Program provided a variety of curriculum and resources on nurturing the parent child relationship, increasing Cindy's engagement with her children's education and supporting Cindy with referrals and resources to stabilize her family.

One of Cindy's long-term stabilization goals was to gain employment and enroll in a business management class. While excited to start school, the client's low income left her ill prepared to begin. FSC provided the family, including Cindy, with school supplies and backpacks from NHHR's Annual Backpack Drive. The client successfully completed her course and attended graduation proudly in her cap and gown. Cindy now attends a 4-year college and secured employment through the referrals and support of FSC. Most importantly with Cindy's daughter and son had both achieved honor role.

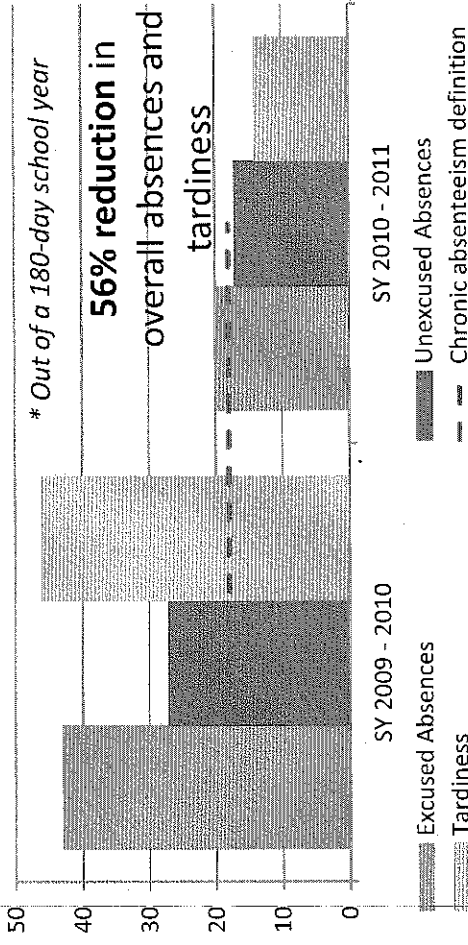
Family Income Change While Enrolled In FSC 2010-2011 School Year



85% of families maintained or increased their income.

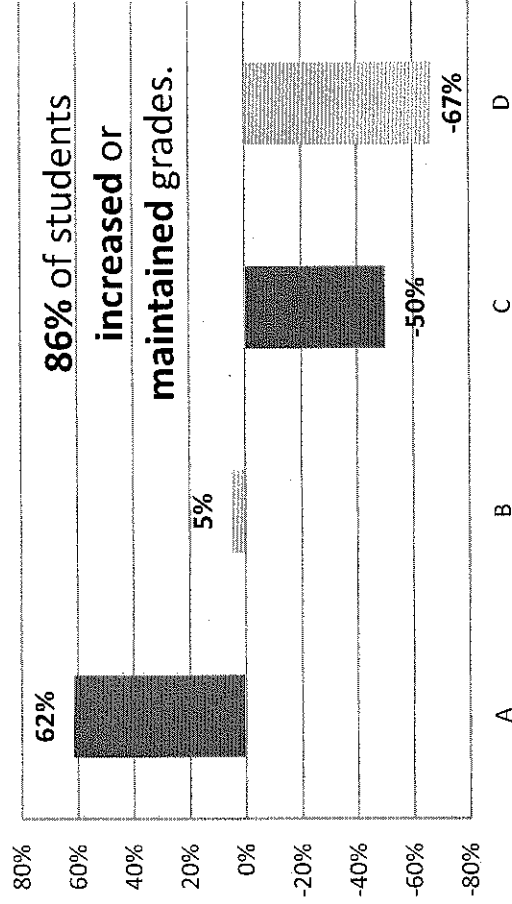
New Haven Family School Connection Fact Sheet

Total # of Missed or Late School Days*



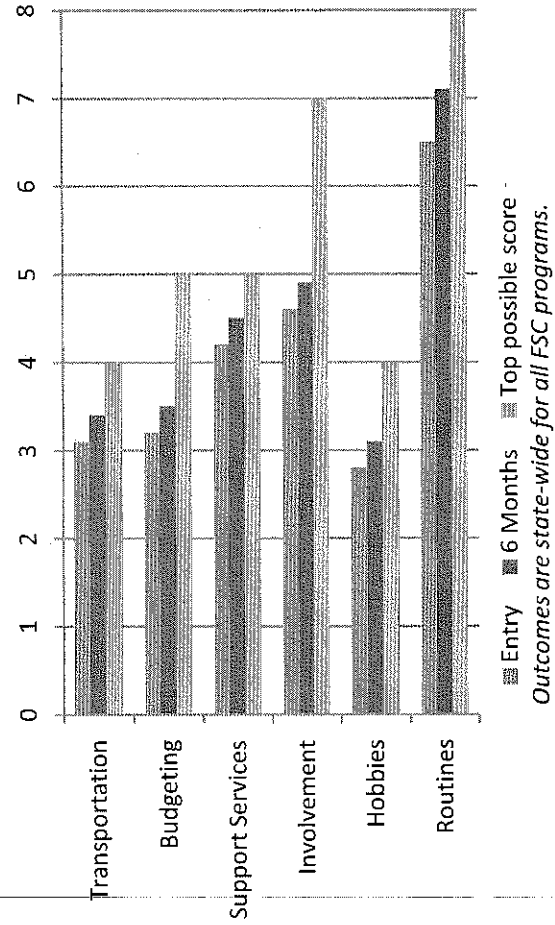
The National Center for Children in Poverty defines chronic absenteeism as 18 or more days of school missed in a school year.

Outcome: Grade Improvements 2010-2011 School Year



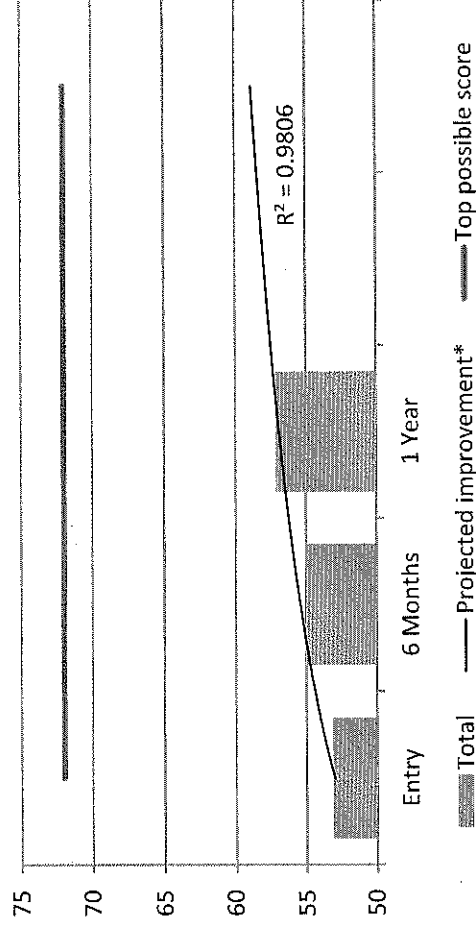
Through in-home visits, FSC staff work with parents to address issues that interfere with their ability to meet the needs of their child. FSC has helped to improve grades and decrease the number of absences & tardiness.

Outcome: Parental Community Life Skills Scale survey



Outcomes are state-wide for all FSC programs.

Outcome: Parent School Involvement survey



*Projected improvement based on continued involvement with FSC program
 Outcomes are state-wide for all FSC programs.

Interested in Closing the Achievement Gap?

Support Family School Connection

ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF ELEMENTARY STUDENTS AT HIGH RISK OF SCHOOL FAILURE

Family School Connection (FSC) provides home visiting services for families whose **children are frequently absent, truant, have academic or behavioral problems, or come to school unprepared.** In addition, the program provides services to parents who are not adequately engaged with their child's school or attending to their child's educational needs.

WHO DOES IT SERVE?

FSC serves about 200 families with elementary school age children – largely between pre-K and third grade - every year. The families are mostly single head of households, have limited educations, high rates of unemployment and few resources. **More than one-third of the parents have less than a high school education.**

HOW DOES IT WORK?

Home visitors meet with the families on a regular basis – usually 2 to 3 times a month – for ten months or more. Home visitors help parents improve parenting skills, spend more time with their children, and make better connections with the school. The home visitors help the parents address the many issues that interfere with their ability to meet needs of their children. They help parents identify problems, develop plans and problem solving skills.

PARTICIPATING PARENTS:

- SPEND MORE TIME HELPING THEIR CHILDREN WITH HOMEWORK AND LISTENING TO THEM READ.
- ARE SIGNIFICANTLY MORE INVOLVED WITH THEIR CHILD'S SCHOOL AND EDUCATION.
- TAKE HOLD OF THEIR DEMANDS AS PARENTS AND MEET THE DEMANDS OF PARENTING.

PARTICIPATING CHILDREN:

- MAKE PROMISING GAINS IN ATTENDANCE, BEHAVIOR OR ACADEMICS.

LOCATED AT SIX ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS - PRE-K TO GRADE 12

- Betances in Hartford
- Bielefield School in Middletown
- Fair Haven School in New Haven
- Wequonnoc School in Norwich
- John M. Moriarty School in Norwich
- W.B. Sweeney School in Willimantic

Don't let the Governor eliminate funds for these critical services



CHILDREN'S TRUST FUND COUNCIL

Family School Connection is a program of the Children's Trust Fund, a division of the Department of Social Services. The evaluation of the program was conducted by the University of Hartford Center for Social Research.